



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## L'ECOLE DES ROCHES

---

HENRI MARTY

L'Ecole des Roches, Verneuil, Eure, France

---

In 1898, M. Edmond Demolins, a French sociologist, published a book that became immensely popular. Its title was, *What Is the Cause of the Superiority of the Anglo-Saxon Races?* In that book Demolins stated that the Latin races seemed to lack some of the qualities which gave a prominent place in the world to the Anglo-Saxons, and one of the chief causes of this inferiority of the Latin races was, according to him, our bad system of education.<sup>1</sup>

After the publication of that book, a number of French people wrote to Demolins, asking him where they could find a school which would put into practice the principles he held. Such a school did not exist in France. To fill the need Demolins founded the *Ecole des Roches*, taking as a model the English schools, Bedales and Abbotsholm.

The new school was not so much the outgrowth of educational ideas as a protest against the wrongs of French education such as was given in the public schools called *lycées* and *collèges*. The question that comes naturally to our mind is this: For what did Demolins reproach the old type of school, and what did he wish to reform?

The tendency of French education had become entirely intellectual. The schools did their best to develop the mind of the child, chiefly the memory, said Demolins, and paid little or no attention to physical and moral education. What was most lacking was the development of initiative and responsibility; to this Demolins attributed the tendency in young people to take government positions and to make sure of a safe though modest living, instead of trying to make the most of their abilities in risky but

<sup>1</sup> *A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* (also an English edition); see also *L'éducation nouvelle: L'Ecole des Roches*, by the same author. (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie).

independent careers. Formerly it was natural that education should prepare individuals to take an assigned and fixed place in a society founded upon obedience to a supreme ruler and the maintenance of differentiated social classes; but now education must give to society the free and enterprising activities which it needs.

In French public boarding-schools the educator is represented by two different persons: the teacher, who does not live in the school, does not know the child, and has no personal and continued intercourse with him—and hence no influence whatever; and the *surveillant*, or supervisor, often a young man studying to be a teacher, and quite absorbed in the preparation for very hard examinations. He has no experience, no training, and his relations to the child are artificial and of little value, as he is unable to acquire any influence, and rules through fear and punishment. In the *lycée* the child or the young man is left to himself as far as his moral training is concerned.

The school itself has no educative influence on the student, because the *lycée* is in the heart of the city: the boy lives between four walls, high and dreary, without any outlook on life or nature; and the *lycée* is organized upon the military principle, with rules more fitting for barracks than for educational institutions, and which put the child under narrow and unrelenting supervision, thus hindering his full and spontaneous development. Such a type of school, still influenced by Napoleon's ideas of centralization and militarism, is not made for the child; it exists especially to prepare a pupil for examinations. As Demolins says: "A student who prepares for our examinations has to overload his memory with very general notions, so as to have a superficial and passing knowledge of the examination requirements." Then the most appropriate book is the textbook, and the work of the classroom becomes bound to the textbook. The only faculty in action is memory, and the system of teaching is what is known under the name of "cramming." As M. Jules Lemaitre, the well-known writer, says: "The average graduate of our high schools, that is to say, a good young man who knows neither Latin or Greek, but who, on the other hand, does not know any better modern languages, geography, or natural science, is a monster, a prodigy of nothingness."

As you see, the situation was pretty bad. But I hasten to say

that if Demolins' ideas had such a great success it was because a reaction was already taking place, which brought about the important reform of 1902.

I want now to examine, not only how the *Ecole des Roches* puts into practice the ideas of its founder, but, from a broader point of view, to show you what that school is and what place may be assigned to it in the educational thought of today.

The *Ecole des Roches* is a secondary boarding-school for boys; it corresponds to what in our public-school system is called a *lycée* or *collège*; that is to say, it takes boys at the age of eight or nine years and carries them through to the *baccalauréat* examination, which, as you know, opens the door of the university, of the civil service, and in a general way, "opens all the doors without leading anywhere."

The *lycées* and *collèges* are usually in a city; the *Ecole des Roches* is right in the country, in Normandy, two hours from Paris.

It is divided into five houses, in which teachers and pupils live together. In each house dwell about five teachers and from twenty-five to thirty-five boys. It is in the house that the boy lives, takes his meals, and studies outside the classroom. The house is the social unit in the school, it is the natural group, just as the family is the unit in society. The house has for its aim to give to the child the advantages of the home and of the home activities. Each one is directed by a house master who takes special care of the boys' intellectual development and moral education; his wife has charge of the household, and is of no little help to him in dealing with the boys.

Here is a broad outline of the day's work of a boy living in one of these houses: from eight until half-past twelve he is in the central building of the school, where he meets the boys from other houses and joins the group with which he works; from half-past twelve until two he is in his house for luncheon; from two until four the afternoon is devoted either to organized games or to manual training; after five the boy is in the house, where he does the work assigned to him in the classroom. All meals are taken with teachers living in the house; the evening is spent in games, reading, dramatic or musical entertainments, etc.

From the twenty-five or thirty-five boys living in a house, three, four, or five so-called captains, or prefects, are chosen, who are responsible for order in the study-room, reading-room, dormitories, and all other places where the boys meet. This system of confidence in the boys, this faith in their ability to organize themselves, is quite different from the close supervision of the *lycée*, and is certainly a new departure in continental European education. Now that it has been tested for several years, and not only in our school, this experiment has proved quite successful, and nothing can be more inspiring and encouraging to an educator than the meetings of the captains of the school, discussing the interests, the weak points, and the future of a community in the direction of which they know they have an important share.

The boy in the *Ecole des Roches* spends his morning in the classroom. Without entering into details, let me give you an idea of what he studies.

If you read the books written by M. Demolins, you will notice his enthusiasm in condemning examinations and, especially, the *baccalauréat*, and you will perhaps be surprised to see the school preparing for that examination. Many see here a contradiction to the principle upon which the school has been founded. Such is not the case. Our aim is to fit our boys for life; we cannot ignore an examination without which it is, in our country, very difficult to start in life. But we look at the examination as a means, not as an end. If the school turns out "bachelors," it is accidental; the essential thing is to form men. We do not put much stress upon the direct preparation for the examinations. However, the new schools of France have very good results in these examinations, better results even than the *lycées* of Paris. Smaller classes, continual intercourse with teachers of high intellectual and moral standing, better assimilation of subject-matter, larger outlook upon life, are the causes of this success. If we teach Latin it is because we believe, with most educators, that it is a marvelous means of training the mind, especially the mind of those who belong to the Latin nations.

But though we still respect classical culture, we have laid special stress upon what are called "modern" subjects. The high-school course is divided into three sections:

1. The classical section, with three different branches: Greek and Latin, Latin and sciences, Latin and modern languages.

2. The "modern" section: modern languages and sciences.

These two sections fit the boys to pass the *baccalauréat* examinations, and exist in all French secondary schools.

3. The special section, preparing especially for agriculture or business. To the boys who have taken this course the school gives a diploma whose value is now recognized by many technical colleges.

One of the things peculiar to the *Ecole des Roches* is the teaching of modern languages. All our boys spend a certain time in English and German schools, and so acquire a practical knowledge of the language when they are eleven or twelve years of age. Not only do they acquire a knowledge of a foreign language, but a broader point of view for foreign affairs.

Out of one hundred and eighty-eight boys we had in the school in the year 1910, twenty-eight spoke very good English, and ninety others had spent from three months to a year in England. Twenty-four spoke very good German, and thirty-seven others had spent from three months to a year in Germany.

In the afternoon our boys have manual training three times a week. This may seem quite natural to you, but whoever knows the French secondary schools will admit that it was a great innovation. Our manual training includes: cardboard building, book-binding, clay modeling, woodwork, metal and leather work, forge, gardening, farming, and even photography. A farm is connected with the school. Some boys work there, and it is our aim to make their work more and more real.

The other three afternoons are given over to games: football in winter, cricket in summer. That, too, was an innovation in French schools. The day ends in the house, where the boy does his homework and where he finds a home atmosphere.

The *Ecole des Roches*, as I have said, was, more than anything else, a reaction against the insufficient moral education of the *lycées*. In this school moral education is based upon mutual confidence of teachers and pupils. Truthfulness is the great quality that is expected from each one; this alone allows our students much

more liberty than is found in other schools. Every member of the school has to understand that true liberty does not consist in breaking through the rules, but in accepting them willingly and joyfully.

In the work of moral education, the teachers find an invaluable assistance in the *captains* chosen from the oldest and most responsible boys. The captain is to the boy as an older brother and his authority is nearly always undisputedly recognized.

The *Ecole des Roches* sees in religion a most important condition of moral growth. The school has a Catholic chapel and a hall set aside for Protestant worship.

If we wish to express briefly the aim of the school, we may say that the *Ecole des Roches* wants to develop healthy bodies, open and learned minds, loyal and independent characters, men of initiative who, to make their way in the world, do not rely upon their fortune, their parents or relatives, but upon themselves. It is in that sense that our pupils must understand their motto: *Well armed for life*.

The *Ecole des Roches* is not alone of its kind; in England, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, similar schools exist.

Objections have been made to these schools. I wish to answer some of them.

It is said (1) that they are boarding-schools; (2) that they do not prepare seriously enough for examinations; (3) that they are open only to people of wealth.

To these objections one can answer with M. Ferrière, a Swiss educator, one of the men who best understands the new movement:

(1) *Boarding-schools*.—I think I am expressing the opinion of most educators when I say that if the parents are able to fulfil their educational duties it is much better that the child remain with them. But can all parents educate their children? There are some who are not equal to the task, who are occupied by their profession, who have too many children to look after every one of them, who live in the unhealthy cities, or in the country far from any school, or in foreign countries, or in colonies. There are children who have no real home; there are children who, for their own good, should be taken from their home environment. . . . It is for these that boarding-schools are made. Besides, long vacations bring together, when it is possible, parents and children. I have

very often noticed that the child who has never left his own home is the one who least felt the value of it.

(2) *Examinations*.—I shall not be long on that point. I shall be content to say that the results of examinations in the new schools are equal and even superior to those of the public schools. As Dr. Lietz, the founder of the German new schools, said: "In general, the examiners noticed that our pupils had a better general training than those of the public schools, and showed more accuracy of judgment in scientific discussion. The reason is without any doubt that we do not give them so many things to assimilate, but that we develop within them to a greater extent the faculty of reasoning and an accurate judgment."

(3) *Expense*.—The tuition, it is true, is from fifteen hundred to three thousand francs. To that objection I shall answer by quoting Demolins: "We must realize that there is but one thing we owe to our son; that is, the best education possible, the best adapted to actual necessities of life. . . . With that and his father's blessing, the boy has to rely upon himself and fight his own fight."

Professor Farrington, in his recent and most valuable book on French secondary schools, says that the new schools, such as the *Ecole des Roches*, have no chance of developing and multiplying. I entirely agree with him on that point. Our aim is not to establish everywhere schools on the model of the *Ecole des Roches*. Our aim is to do, in the new schools, a work that can be of use to the other public and private schools. Often the public schools have too great responsibilities, too many difficulties, to make new experiments. In connection with them there should be laboratory schools of practical pedagogy to show them the way. That is what the new schools in Europe want to be.